

NEWS



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JUSTICE COURTS

MARICOPA COUNTY

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Justice Courts to increase use of Internet to improve efficiency

PHOENIX – The Maricopa County Justice Courts are looking to the Internet to improve efficiency, cut costs and increase public safety.

The Justice Court system is set to begin expanding “Internet video arraignment” from seven to a total of 13 courts over the next three months. Seven justices of the peace currently use Internet video to arraign non-violent misdemeanor defendants* in custody at the First Avenue Jail and have used it to arraign nearly 2,000 defendants each of the past two years.

The process is simple. Defendants stand before a monitor and computer camera set up in a holding area at the jail while judges speak to them via real-time Internet links using monitors and cameras set up at their courts. Under the traditional system, some in-custody defendants must wait to see the judge until the next regularly scheduled weekly van or bus trip from the jail to each Justice Court. But with Internet video, Judges can arraign defendants throughout the week.

“Internet video arraignment is a winner for everybody involved,” said Presiding Justice of the Peace G.M. Osterfeld. “Incarceration is expensive. This system can cut four or five days from the amount of time the county must house certain non-violent defendants before they can stand before a judge to enter a plea.” Video arraignment also reduces a prisoner’s flight risk since it allows judges to see defendants without ever taking them from the security of the jail.

The Peoria, Wickenburg, East Tempe, West Tempe, Glendale, West Phoenix and West Mesa justice courts currently use Internet video arraignment.

*Note: Only non-violent defendants that have been arrested on failure to appear or outstanding misdemeanor warrants are eligible for Internet video appearances. Some defendants that appear are being held for failure to pay fines related to previous offenses.